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COUNTRY East Germany

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SUBJECT Events and Rumors in Upper Lusatia

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1. A new telephone directory issued about 1 June 1952 by the OPD Dresden listed names, addresses, and occupations of subscribers in both the German and the Wendish languages for the Landkreise of Zittau, Görlitz, Löbau, Bautzen, Kamenz, and part of Pirna, constituting the Saxon, or Upper, Lusatia (Oberlausitz), whose population of over half a million includes some 32,000 persons who speak Wendish. About three weeks later, highway signs and guideposts appeared with inscriptions and place-names in both languages even in areas with no Wendish-speaking inhabitants.
2. These innovations aroused a certain agitation among the populace, which was intensified when the mayor of Ringenhain (near Neukirch) called a public meeting and announced that a resettlement project was planned under which Germans would be replaced by Wends. The meeting was held about 5 July, but broke up in a heated discussion because it appeared that all the Germans were to be removed from Upper Lusatia and distributed in Brandenburg, Mecklenburg, and Saxony-Anhalt, and that their place was to be taken by the Protestant "Prussian" Wends of Lower Lusatia (the Spreewald). There were vigorous protests, and even a few protest strikes, against this scheme.
3. Local SED functionaries scoffed at the whole matter, but were unable to get an official denial from the state authorities. Indeed, they let it be understood that Czechoslovakia is to obtain this territory as compensation for its sufferings under the Nazis and for the loss of Carpathian Ruthenia. As a result, panicky shopkeepers made efforts to dispose of their stocks, so as to be prepared with cash in case of evacuation.

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1. Comment: There was apparently no appreciation of the improbability of an attempt to replace a population of 500,000 with a group of less than a tenth of that size.

CLASSIFICATION

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